

Services stage successful test of mobile rocket system

By Fred W. Baker III
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Early-entry forces are one step closer to gaining faster deep-field artillery firepower on the battlefield.

A Nov. 19 evaluation on Fort Sill, Okla., marked the first time that the Army's new High Mobility Artillery Rocket

System was combat-loaded with rockets, flown by C-130 to an assault landing zone, downloaded and employed to fire a six-round live-fire mission.

The test mission – a joint effort of the Army, Air Force and Marine Corps – was a great success for a system designed to deliver early-entry and light forces protection and firepower they've never had before, said Col. James Heverin, training and doctrine command system manager for rocket and missile systems at Fort Sill.

Weighing in at well under its 44,000-pound, M-270 counterpart, the newly developed 35,000-pound HIMARS is in line with the Army's vision of a lighter, more lethal force, Heverin said.

"This provides us a rocket and missile capability that we have not been able to have in certain places in our battlefield," Heverin said.

"Now ... we can go to places on the battlefield that we otherwise haven't been able to go, and put a capability in



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A High Mobility Artillery Rocket System fires a volley of reduced-range practice rounds Nov. 19.

miles from Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Ala., to the newly developed landing zone at Fort Sill. The 3,500-foot-long strip of dirt was carved out of rugged terrain by Army engineers in the past month, and replicates a "worst case [landing] scenario" for the C-130 crew, Heverin said.

HIMARS is designed to be transported quickly between theaters of operations, he said.

Less than fifteen minutes after landing during the test, the HIMARS' three-man crew had the system ready to receive a fire mission.

"The bottom line for this system is that it performed almost flawlessly, meeting all standards and requirements. This is extremely important to the field artillery and to the Army in general, because the 'king of battle' is now prepared to move into the future with its newest and most effective launch system," Heverin said.

The first HIMARS to be fielded are on track to be delivered to the 18th Airborne Corps in March 2005

the hands of commanders to fire the deep fires ... that we haven't had before," he said.

"Early-entry operations forces, light forces and special operations forces now all stand to gain by the mobility and the transportability that this system provides us," Heverin said.

The C-130 flew the combat-loaded HIMARS more than 650 nautical

Army to suspend conditional promotions

By Spc. Bill Putnam
Army News Service

Effective Jan. 1, all conditional promotions Armywide from sergeant to sergeant first class will be suspended.

The new policy, dated Nov. 21, states that Soldiers must graduate from their respective noncommissioned officer education school before being considered for promotion.

Sergeants must graduate from Primary Leadership Development Course to be considered for staff sergeant; staff sergeants must graduate from the Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course to be considered for sergeant first class; and sergeants first class must graduate from the Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course for consideration to master sergeant.

"We always figured it would stop," Sgt. Maj. Julian Edmondson, personnel policy integrator at the Pentagon's G-1 staff, said of the conditional promotion policy.

"It's hard enough to manage during peacetime," Edmondson said. "With a war it was a nightmare."

There are 36,641 Soldiers waiting for seats in the Army's various Noncommissioned Officer Education System schools, said Command Sgt. Maj. Lionel Parker of the Army's G-3 (Operations) institutional training shop.

Parker said the Army's operation staff is working out the details of a plan to train soldiers who are waiting for school seats.

The new policy also directs that retiring Soldiers or those who are leaving the Army depart the Army in their current rank regardless of their NCOES status.

The policy of conditionally promoting a Soldier to the next rank started en masse around 1992, Edmondson said.

Now the policy is "back to what it was" before 1992, he said.